(iii) In 2004-05 Budget, the entire textile sector, except for man-made fibre and filament yarn was provided optional exemption from excise duty. In 2005-06 Budget, Central Value-added Tax (CENVAT) on Polyester Filament Yarn has been reduced from 24% to 16%. These modifications in fiscal levies aim at attracting more investments for modernization of textile sector.

(iv) To facilitate import of state of the art machinery to make our products internationally competitive in post quota regime, in 2005-06 Budget, the customs duty on textile machinery has been brought down to 10% except for 23 machinery appearing in List 49, which attracts Basic Customs Duty (BCD) of 15%. The concessional duty of 5% continues to be at 5% on most of the machinery items.

(v) Government has launched the Debt Restructuring Scheme w.e.f. September, 2003 with the principal objective to permit banks to lend to the textile sector at 8-9% rate of interest.

(vi) Government has allowed 100% Foreign Direct Investment in the textile sector under automatic route.

(vii) Government has de-reserved the readymade garments, hosiery and knitwear from SSI sector so that large-scale investments may be encouraged in these sectors.

(viii) National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) has been set up to provide the leadership role in sensitizing the Industry to the concept of value addition by inducting trained professionals to manage the industry. This has resulted in an increased demand for trained professionals in various sectors servicing the industry.

(ix) A series of relief measures to textiles exporters such as enhanced DEPB and Duty drawback rates, reduced ECGC premium, subvention on credit rates, refund of service tax paid by exporters on various services etc.;

(x) Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) has established Apparel Training Design Centres (ATDCs) throughout the country to cope with the requirement of skilled/semi-skilled manpower for the textile industry.

Assistance for converting handlooms into powerlooms in Tamil Nadu

1076. SHRI S. ANBALAGAN: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to render assistance to convert handlooms into powerlooms in the State of Tamil Nadu considering the presence of huge number of handlooms so as to increase the income of weavers;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Handlooms constitute a timeless facet of the rich cultural heritage of India. Tradition of weaving by hand is a part of the country's cultural ethos. The strength of Handloom lies in introducing innovative design, which cannot be replicated by the Powerloom Sector. As an economic activity, the handloom sector occupies a place second only to agriculture in providing livelihood to the people.

Office of Development Commissioner for Handlooms in the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India has been liberally funding the State Governments for implementing various schemes for handloom weavers to address the felt needs of the handloom weavers to enhance their production, productivity and enhance the income and social economic status of the weavers by providing skill up-gradation, infrastructure and input supply support to them. During the 11th Five Year Plan, the Office of Development Commissioner for Handlooms has been implementing 5 Schemes *viz.* (1) Integrated Handlooms Development Scheme, (2) Handloom Weavers Comprehensive Welfare Scheme which consist of Health Insurance Scheme and Mahatma Gandhi Bunkar Bima Yojana, (3) Mill Gate Price Scheme, (4) Marketing and Export Promotion Scheme, and (5) Diversified Handloom Development Scheme.

The State Government is also attaching utmost priority in providing continuous employment and regular wages to the Handloom Weavers by extending financial assistance. The Government of Tamil Nadu is implementing the free distribution scheme as well as uniform cloth for students with huge financial outlay, thereby, the handloom weavers are getting continuous employment and reasonable wages throughout the year. Government of Tamil Nadu is providing free electricity of 100 units by monthly to all the handloom weavers. Further, the Government is also also sanctioning Rs. 400 as Old Age Pension (OAP) to the weavers who attained 60 years of age and family pension of Rs. 550 p.m. to the legal heir of the weaver for 10 years in the event of death of weaver before attaining the age of 60 years. Under Comprehensive Welfare Scheme which consist of Health Insurance and Mahatama Gandhi Bunkar Bima Yojana of the Office of the Development Commissioner (Handlooms) the medical and insurance benefits are extended to all the weavers as well as ancillary workers both within and outside the cooperative fold.

In view of the several welfare measures taken by Central Government and State Government for the welfare of weavers there is no urge from the handloom weavers of Tamil Nadu for conversion from handlooms to powerlooms.

Expansion of textiles technical market

1077. MS. MABEL REBELLO:
SHRI B.J. PANDA:

Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether expansion of our textiles technical market is on the fast track and it could grow more than four times;